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SUBJECT: FRANCE ON EXPANDING UN PARTICIPATION OF DEPENDENT TERRITORIES

REF: STATE 41363

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1. Deputy Polcouns discussed reftel points on rights of dependent territories March 16 and again March 17 with MFA IO Political Affairs DAS-equivalent Jean-Hughes Simon-Michel, whose office is also responsible for decolonization issues but does not deal directly with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. We spoke separately March 17 with IO Latin American desk officer Bernard Guidee to follow up further.

2. Both Simon-Michel and Guidee stated that France fully shared the U.S. view that it is not appropriate for other countries to decide on the nature of the participation of non-autonomous territories. France would have objections similar to those of the U.S. if other countries were to make similar proposals affecting one of its overseas territories.

3. Both Simon-Michel and Guidee clarified that France would support the U.S. position on this issue despite the fact, in this specific case, that the French territories located in Latin American and the Caribbean are all overseas "departments" rather than "territories," and thus not be subject to the draft resolutions in question. French departments, even overseas, are considered to be simple extensions of the French mainland, where French law applies fully, as in the case of Hawaii for the U.S. (Note: Under the French "DOM-TOM" designation, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana, St. Martin, St. Barthelemy, and Reunion are all overseas departments, whereas New Caledonia and French Polynesia are territories.)

4. Neither Simon-Michel nor Guidee were personally familiar with the specific UN Economic Commission discussed reftel, but undertook to find out more about their delegations instructions for the March 20-24 meeting. After further consultations within the MFA, however, Guidee subsequently reconfirmed the French position as stated above and informed us that Paris would instruct the French delegation to the March 20-24 ECLAC session to join the U.S. in opposing the resolution.

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Stapleton